

2007-2008 CHARTER ISSUE SUMMARY

Commission Review: Requirement for County Council to take action on all proposed Charter Review Commission Amendments

Issue subject: Should the Charter be amended to require the County Council to take action on any proposed charter amendments brought forth by the Charter Review Commission?

Issue raised by: Some members of the Charter Review Commission argued that, during prior Commissions, the Council neglected to take action on many important recommendations. During the February 26th 2008 Charter Review Commission meeting, a motion was brought forth to elect the commissioners, which would allow charter amendments to go directly to the ballot. The motion failed, but an alternative amendment was proposed by Commissioner John Groen requiring Council action on all Commission recommendations.

Description of issue: Section 800 of the Charter requires that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years, and that a Charter Review Commission be appointed to conduct the review. There is no requirement that the Council take action on any of the Commission's recommendations. Each of the other Washington Home Rule charter counties elects its commissioners, and provides for all commission recommendations to be placed before the voters. This is not an option in King County, because an appointed commission does not have "legislative authority" to place amendments onto the ballot.

However, an alternative was suggested that would require the Council to take action on each charter amendment presented by the Charter Review Commission. Such action could include any course requiring a public vote of the council, including a decision to forward the matter to voters, not forward the matter to voters, or table consideration of the issue.

Suggested Language:

Section 800 Charter Review and Amendments.

At least every ten years after the adoption of this charter, the county executive shall appoint a citizen commission of not less than fifteen members whose mandate shall be to review the charter and present, or cause to be presented, to the county council a written report recommending those amendments, if any, which should be made to the charter. This citizen commission shall be composed of at least one representative from each of the county council districts. Within [one hundred and twenty // ninety days] after receiving the commission's report, the county council shall consider the commission's proposed charter amendments and take such action thereon as it deems appropriate.